Higg Facility Environmental Module (FEM) Verifier Training Protocol

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Acknowledgments

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

1.1.1 The goal of the Higg Index is to drive performance improvement with the footwear, apparel, and home textile value chains. The Higg Index Facility Environment Module (FEM) is one tool within the suite of Higg Index tools. It is a self-assessment conducted by Facilities, to evaluate their level of environmental performance from basic compliance and awareness up through aspirational practices. These self-assessments may be verified by an external FEM Verifier and shared via the Worldly platform. Over time the factory can demonstrate improvements to their environmental programs by posting successive FEM scores.

1.1.2 Correctly verifying the Higg Self-Assessment requires verifiers to understand the expectations and requirements of Cascale's FEM Verification Program. To ensure Verifiers have in-depth knowledge of the program, Cascale has created a Verifier Training Program and Exam that verifiers must pass in order to be eligible to conduct FEM Verifications.

2 TRAINING INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL INFORMATION

2.1 TRAINING PURPOSE

2.1.1 Provide education to Verifiers, so that they have the knowledge and ability to provide verification to Facilities.

2.1.2 Test Verifiers knowledge with a final exam post training.

2.1.3 Recognize Verifiers who have successfully passed the application criteria, Training, and Exam as eligible FEM Verifiers.

2.1.4 Ensure Stakeholders have confidence in the Verifiers that conduct verification.

2.2 TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

2.2.1 Verifiers must meet minimum requirements, including having proper experience and a base knowledge of environmental topics in order to be eligible to take the Training.

2.2.1.1 Verifier eligibility is determined through the Verifier Application Process.

2.2.2 Verifiers must have the ability to access the online Learning Management System.

2.2.3 Verifiers must successfully complete a learning plan (hereafter "the Training") facilitated online that consists of a combination of topic specific courses and a proctored exam.

2.2.4 The Training consists of approximately 40 contact/activity hours.

2.2.5   The Training covers all Higg FEM-related topics.

2.2.6   Verifiers must pass the associated exam.

2.3   BENEFITS OF COMPLETING THE TRAINING

2.3.1   Becoming listed as a Cascale FEM Verifier on the Worldly Platform

2.3.1.1   Facilities may only utilize eligible FEM Verifiers in order for FEM Verification results to be considered Verified.

2.3.2   Receiving Cascale approval for Verifiers that can be used to market your verification services with customers.

2.4   Benefits OF ONLINE LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM FACILITATION FOR THE TRAINING:

2.4.1   Attendees can complete the Training when and where it is convenient for them.

2.4.2   Attendees can go through the Training at their own speed, allowing attendees to move quickly through concepts that they already know and spending more time on new concepts.

2.4.3   Attendees can interact with 'Instructors' and 'Tutors', asking questions receiving feedback.

2.4.4   The training is cost efficient, as travel costs are not required.

2.4.5   Attendees always have access to the latest training while they are a Cascale eligible Verifier. They can refresh their knowledge on any topic whenever they need.

2.4.6   Attendees can ask or review answers to FAQs or discussion topics posted in the verifier forums.

2.5   TRAINING DETAILS

2.5.1   The Training is facilitated through an online learning management system or LMS, and can be found at https://sumerra.docebosaas.com/.

2.5.2   To successfully complete this training, Attendees must provide or have access to:

2.5.2.1   Internet at sufficient speeds and quality to view the training

2.5.2.2   Webcam (for proctored exam)

2.5.2.3   The ability to view photos, videos, documents, etc.

2.5.2.4   A unique Email address

2.5.3   **Training Duration:**

2.5.3.1 Completion of the Training is estimated to require up to 40 hours of contact/activity time

2.5.3.2 The Training can be spread out and is not required to be completed all at once

2.5.4 **Suggestions for Trainees:**

2.5.4.1 Location: Learning is best accomplished in a quiet place so that attendees can focus on the materials

2.5.4.2 Time: Set aside a block of time to focus on the Training, rather than multi-task through the Training, allowing a focus on the materials

2.5.4.3 Have available Higg reference materials (especially when technical topics are discussed)

2.5.4.4 Utilize the instructors:

2.5.4.4.1 Use the Forum to ask questions and to research answers given to previously asked and answered questions

2.5.4.5 Attend 'Office Hours' in which Instructors are available to answer specific questions from attendees

2.5.5 The FEM Higg Verifier Training consists of a Learning Plan with multiple Courses; these courses include:

2.5.5.1 Introduction to the Cascale

2.5.5.2 Using Worldly

2.5.5.3 Environmental Management Systems

2.5.5.4 Energy and Greenhouse Gas

2.5.5.5 Water Use

2.5.5.6 Wastewater

2.5.5.7 Emissions to Air

2.5.5.8 Waste Management

2.5.5.9 Chemicals

2.5.5.10 Advanced Chemical Specialty (required for verifiers with a Chemical specialty)

2.5.5.11 Conducting Verifications

2.5.6 The Training includes On-line learning modules, including:

2.5.6.1   'Lectures' and Reading

2.5.6.2   Activities such as matching, ordering, listing, finding, etc.

2.5.6.3   Outside activities and 'homework' (activities done while not online or done within the course itself)

2.5.7   **Training Completion:**

2.5.7.1   Approval as a verifier is only provided when the Training is completed in its entirety

2.5.7.2   There are no refunds for unfinished courses or learning plans

2.5.7.3   All courses in a designated learning plan must be completed to move onto the final exam

2.5.8   **Timeline for Training completion:**

2.5.8.1   It is the duty of the Attendee to complete the Training – the VPM will not force Training completion

2.5.8.1.1   The VPM may send reminders to attendees if there is(are) uncompleted course(s) or learning plans

2.5.8.2   The Training must be completed within 6 months of approval to start the course

2.5.8.3   The Verifier is not placed on the eligible Verifier List until the Training is completed and the final exam has been passed

2.5.8.4   If the Training is not completed within 6 months:

2.5.8.4.1   The user is unenrolled from the Training and that applicant is no longer permitted to complete the designated courses in learning plan.

2.5.8.4.2   If the applicant wants to become eligible, they must re-apply and go through the vetting process again (including paying another application fee)

3   VERIFIER TRAINEE EXPECTATIONS

3.1.1   Verifier Trainees are expected to devote the time and energy required to learn the materials so that verifications provided to Facilities is effective and Facilities can learn and meet expectations

3.1.2   Utilize all available resources to help themselves learn the materials; resources include:

3.1.2.1   www.howtohigg.org resource materials

3.1.2.2   'How to Higg' guidance document

3.1.2.3   Previous experience

3.1.2.4   Co-workers and/or other knowledgeable individuals

3.1.2.5   Course Instructors and Tutors

3.1.2.6   Information contained within the course

3.1.2.7   Additional information contained on the Course Site

3.1.3   Fully complete each assignment, either in a course (meaning, while on-line and going through the e-learning course) or with off-line assignments

3.1.3.1   Partially completed assignments may be returned for completion

3.1.3.2   Inaccurate assignments will not be accepted as complete and will be returned for improvement

3.1.4   **Ethics and Honesty**

3.1.4.1   It is expected that attendees are honest and ethical while in training; this includes:

3.1.4.1.1   The person completing the Training is the one who receives the certificate and actually is providing the verification (i.e. a person cannot have another individual take the course or exam for them)

3.1.4.1.2   The individual taking the course must learn the materials for themselves, but are encouraged to reach out to the instructors, tutors and peers, reachable through the LMS, to ask questions and gain more knowledge

4   EXAM

4.1.1   **Verifier exams:**

4.1.1.1   Are expected to take between 1-3 hours, with an average of 2 hours.

4.1.1.2   Are remotely proctored, meaning exam takers will be monitored through the exam.

4.1.2   Applicants are required to follow the exam rules, as provided before and during the exam

4.1.3   Suggestions for taking the exam include:

4.1.3.1   Set aside enough time to complete the exam

4.1.3.2   Ensure the area is proper for completing the test (quiet, where there are no disruptions, etc.)

4.1.3.3   Ensure the technology is ready (including internet access)

4.1.3.4   Ensure all reference materials are ready

4.1.4   Individuals who are taking the exam must be honest during the exam process. This includes, but is not limited to:

4.1.4.1   Exams must be completed by the Applicant

4.1.4.2   There is to be no assistance during the exam by others

4.1.4.3   If cheating or dishonestly is suspected, at the request and under the direction of the VPM, the individual may be asked to verify their honesty during the exam – this may include:

4.1.4.3.1   Signing a statement of honesty

4.1.4.3.2   Providing additional responses to specific questions or concerns discovered through proctoring process

4.1.4.3.3   Retaking the exam, either in whole or in part

4.1.4.3.4   If cheating or dishonesty is confirmed, the Applicant will be banned from conducing Higg-related work.

4.1.5   Exams must be completed in full – there is no partial credit is given nor is the exam scored until it is fully completed and submitted

4.1.6   The Exam must be done within 1 month from completing the training

4.1.7   **Exam Failure and Retake:**

4.1.7.1   There is one final exam retake if the first exam is not passed

4.1.7.2   Should the Applicant fail the retake exam, or not complete the retake exam within one month of the first exam, they must wait 6 months to reapplying as a Verifier (including paying all fees)

4.1.7.3   An exam retake must be completed within one month from the date of the last failed exam

4.1.7.3.1   Exam fees apply for retaking the exam

4.1.7.3.2   Exam fees are nonrefundable

5 POST VERIFIER TRAINING SURVEY

5.1 BACKGROUND

5.1.1   The Cascale application and training program for Verifiers, and potential Verifiers, is intended to be effective and efficient in finding and preparing Verifier candidates to professionally conduct Higg FEM Verifications that produce credible and comparable results. To ensure that the application and training meets these goals, after each person completes their training and exam, a survey is sent to the Training participant to gather feedback about their training and exam process experience. This information is used by both Cascale and Sumerra to continually drive improvements in the training program.

5.2 PURPOSE

5.2.1   The purpose of the survey is to:

5.2.1.1   Provide an opportunity for Training Participants to report on their experience with the application, training and exam

5.2.1.2   Provide a mechanism for Training Participants to easily report inaccuracies or areas for improvement

5.2.1.3   Provide Cascale and the VPM with necessary feedback to improve the Higg FEM Verifier application, training and exam programs

5.2.2   The intent of the survey is not to:

5.2.2.1   Provide an opportunity to challenge application and/or exam results

5.2.2.2   Provide training, consulting or additional information on a circumstance or situation in an attempt to change results

5.3 PROCESS

5.3.1   After the exam questions are completed, and prior to the Applicant finalizing the exam, the Applicant is required to complete the survey

5.3.2   On a periodic basis, the VPM analyzes the survey information, attempting to determine:

5.3.2.1   If there are gaps in the Application, Training and/or Exam processes that should/could be addressed through improvements to any or all parts of the process

5.3.2.2   If there are groups of applicants that have issues or concerns that can be mitigated through process changes and/or improvements

5.3.2.2.1   These groups may encompass certain languages, geographies, company background, or other commonalities

5.3.2.3   If there are technical challenges such as level of Verifier technical knowledge, IT/Internet related issues, etc. that require training or additional support

5.3.2.4   If there are any Ethics-related concerns or allegations, the Ethics program and investigations begin

5.3.3   If there are inaccuracies in the training content that are incorrect or misleading, the VPM will adjust the training content as quickly as possible

5.3.4   If there are inaccuracies in the Exam content, the VPM will adjust the exam as quickly as possible. If the adjustment impacts the score for applicants that have previously completed the exam, the VPM will adjust the score as well as the eligibility status (if needed)

5.3.5   If there are issues that indicate the Training Participant should be granted an additional opportunity for an exam, the VPM may choose to provide this (costs may apply)

5.4 SURVEY QUESTIONS

5.4.1 **Application:**

5.4.1.1   Approximately how many hours did it take for you to complete the Application? (Answer: must be a number)

5.4.1.2   Please answer using the choices below whether you agree or disagree with the statements regarding the application (Available answers are Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)

5.4.1.3   The application was easy to complete.

5.4.1.4   The application process was fair.

5.4.1.5   The application has the correct criteria to select highly qualified individuals to become FEM Higg Verifiers.

5.4.1.6   Please note any specific recommended improvements to the application process (optional)

5.4.2 **Training:**

5.4.2.1   Approximately how many hours did it take for you to complete the Training? (Answer must be a number)

5.4.2.2   Please answer using the choices below whether you agree or disagree with the statements regarding the training (Available answers are Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)

5.4.2.3   It was easy was it to use the technology for the training (the platform, or Learning Management System).

5.4.2.4   The training was effective in teaching me what I needed to know to conduct Verifications.

5.4.2.5   The training covers the correct subjects.

5.4.2.6   The training spends the appropriate time on each subject.

5.4.2.7   Interactions with instructors were effective.

5.4.2.8   The activities were effective in helping you learn the subject matter.

5.4.2.9   Enough information was provided to help you conduct effective Higg FEM Verifications.

5.4.2.10 Please note any specific recommended improvements to the training process. (optional)

5.4.3 **Exam:**

5.4.3.1 *Approximately how many hours did it take for you to complete the Exam? (Answer must be a number)*

5.4.3.2 *Please answer using the choices below whether you agree or disagree with the statements regarding the exam (Available answers are Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)*

5.4.3.2.1 It was easy to use the technology of the Exam (proctoring system, etc.).

5.4.3.2.2 The exam was effective in ensuring you know the subject matter.

5.4.3.2.3 The length of the exam is appropriate.

5.4.3.2.4 Please note any specific recommended improvements to the training process. (optional)

5.4.4 Overall Process:

5.4.4.1 *Please answer using the choices below whether you agree or disagree with the statements regarding the overall process (Available answers are Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)*

5.4.4.2 *The Application, Training and Exam effectively select and train Verifiers for the Higg Index FEM verification program.*

5.4.4.3 *After going through the Application, Training and Exam process, you feel prepared and ready to conduct Higg FEM Verifications.*

5.4.4.4 *Please provide any other comments about the Higg Index FEM Verifier Application, Training and Exam process that you would like to share with Cascale and/or VPM.*

6 DOCUMENT CHANGE LOG

Date	Section	Summary of Changes
2021-06-22	n/a	• Combined Verifier Training Policy (VPM-003) and Post Verifier Training Survey Policy (VPM-007)
2024-04-30	n/a	• Updated for Cascale (formerly SAC) rebrand.